DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 193 CS 208 940

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TITLE Working through Children's Developmental and Existential Stress in Picture Books.
PUB DATE Oct 84
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at "The Illustrator as Storyteller" Conference (Chicago, IL, October 19-20, 1984).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Anxiety; Characterization; *Child Development; *Childhood Needs; Child Psychology; *Childrens Literature; Conflict Resolution; Literary Criticism; Literary Devices; Literary Genres; *Picture Books; *Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

The aesthetic quality and psychological subtlety of contemporary picture books give genuine expression to a child's conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions. Increasingly, themes of existential and developmental stress are appearing in picture books. Typical reactions aroused by such stress factors--and also by themes treated in picture books--include the search for identity; the quest for autonomy; achievement needs; the need to belong and to communicate; fears concerning loneliness, alienation, or being different; loss of love or aggression; and death and annihilation. Good picture books that treat these stress factors share a number of common characteristics, including (1) portrayal of the protagonist as an ordinary being, (2) thoughtful plot treatment of serious stress situations, (3) assumption of the young reader's anxieties, (4) communication of a message without being didactic, and (5) relatively sophisticated treatment of the message (using metaphors and symbols). Picture books communicate to children several psychological messages: how to overcome defenselessness; conflicts have a way of changing, moving along; the susceptibility of conflicts to change grows even more obvious if one acts; and stress may be resolved by unconscious maturation processes. (Interspersed throughout the paper are reviews of several books.) References are listed at the end of the paper, including 21 children's books. (HOD)

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WORKING THROUGH CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL AND EXISTENTIAL STRESS IN PICTURE BOOKS

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The contemporary picture book is a ubiquitious major medium whose subjects, styles and techniques have proliferated, appealing to an ever wider range of age groups, including adolescents. As an article of mass consumption, large quantities of mediocre, questionable, inane and simply trashy picture books are to be found everywhere.

However, in its superior examples, the picture book has become an appreciable art form. Remarkable writers and artists working in the field are continually enlarging the scope and variety of themes and motifs, and are producing books of great artistic distinction. Their aesthetic quality and psychological subtlety call for the child psychologist's and the educator's attention, because they give genuine expression to the child's conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions. The illustrator and the author-illustrator particularly present, with great symbolic force, unconscious processes only hinted at in the text. True, literature and the arts have always offered metaphors and symbols for the growing child's basic experiences. The innovation lies in the maturation of the picture book as a serious medium of communication, taking on humanistic responsibilities (Schwarcz, 1982).

Increasingly, themes of stress and anxiety have appeared in picture books published in the last two decades. They present children with imaginative ways of working out their own problems. From among these themes we have chosen one, existential and developmental stress.

Existential stress may be defined as an affective reaction, partly conscious and partly unconscious, to situations and processes occurring in the normal course of life, originating from internal developmental stimuli and/or from external pressures arising from tensions within the environment.

Characteristic instances are relationships in the family, peer group situations, achievement demands, puberty, death and more recently, fear of war, especially nuclear war.

Typical reactions aroused by such stress factors - and also themes treated in picture books - include the search for identity, the quest for autonomy, achievement needs, the need to belong and to communicate, fears concerning loneliness or being left alone, alienation, being different, loss of love or aggression, death and annihilation. Some of these factors appear in a sudden, harsh fashion, but I believe that the more important ones operate quietly and persistently.

The authors and illustrators whose creations I have in mind use various genres to get their visual-verbal message across to the child, e.g. versions of the classical fairy tale with modern pictures; the contemporary fairy tale; the realistic story; the magic-realistic story, where reality and fantasy both clash and intertwine. Instead of elaborating on these genres, I will select a number of books and examine their aesthetic and psychological contents and structures, by proposing certain types.

We have to bear in mind that categories of mental states and of artistic elements overlap to a great extent; none are watertight. Hopefully, in the humanities no category will ever prove to be watertight. All we can rightly do is choose emphases and attempt to justify them.

The books I propose to look at were published originally in either English or German. I am not saying that similar ones are not to be found in other countries and languages. However, it seems that it is in these two cultural areas that the picture book has taken up stress situations of the individual child in an outspoken fashion and turned them into a major motif.

Please let me anticipate a question that might be on your minds: Yes, I

will begin with Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963), - and, Yes, I will end up with Outside Over There (Sendak, 1981). However, I hope to draw your interest to a number of other books in between.

Why would I return to Max of the Wild Things? Only to remind us that he is the father - or is it godfather - of all the ordinary picture book children whose personal sorrows, conflicts and struggles have been treated in a novel way, especially those picture books in which the illustrations in particular create a close-textured connection between outside and inside: As the French title of The Wild Things has it, offering a beautiful double entendre: Max et les Maximonstres.

But now for some emphases and a number of examples. Some of these books I have written about before, and I am revisiting them from a different angle.

COPING WITH PARENTS: As we all know, in the eyes of children parents are both wonderful and difficult people to live with. They want to be trusted implicitly. Are they to be trusted? They want to be loved by me. Do they know how? They certainly know how to bring me up, to care for me. Do they know how to love me? They are so busy with themselves. They are armed, so strongly, with their routine businesses, their stock reactions, their stereotyped fashions of dealing with me. I often wish I didn't need them. But I do. And just as fervently I want to need them. In a sense, coping with parents and their substitutes is the pervading issue. Aspects of the dilemma, which accompanies and occupies the child over long years of affection and anguish, appear in various ways.

David McKee's Not Now, Bernard (1981) is a crisp, clear-cut affair. Whatever Bernard does, he is unable to attract his father's or mother's attention. They are simply busy, reading the paper, watering the flowers. Whatever he starts to say or do, draws the one response - not now, Bernard. Even when he is threatened by and then enveloped by the monster in the garden.

Even when the monster bites father and roars at mother, and makes itself at home in Bernard's room. Sure, mother does care for Bernard; she puts his supper in front of the TV, his milk at his bedside, turns off the light. Yet even though the monster protests and demands recognition of its monstrosity, unseeing routine will not be disturbed.

McKee plays it cool; matter-of-fact text and illustrations offer a simple sequence of exaggerations which create good fun. Children certainly laugh and enjoy being reminded of how ever-busy their parents are, and how unrelenting and sacred daily rituals may become.

But I am not so certain of how far children understand adult humor, and I also always trust the good author and artist that he/she means more than he/she intends. So for some children this book may also contain an expression of protest and despair; the gap between being brought up and being loved seems to be wide beyond hope. Even if I turn into a monster, the change of identity will go unnoticed. Bernard gives up because he feels given up.

Beni Montresor's Bedtime! (1978) is another book about routine. Bedtime is announced by towering impersonal parents, seem from below, shoes and boots and legs, exemplifying unfeeling oppression. However, Daniel is not a give-upper. "Not for me!" he says and immediately mobilizes a striking array of fantasy creatures as he escapes and hides in the magic castle. He runs on and on down corridors into rooms painted in rich saturated colors, each containing a world of its own, and is invited again and again to stay. Heaven and hell, the Madonna and the Devil promise rest and quiet. Daniel sinks into bed after bed, - to be assailed by the voices calling "Bedtime," searing the dream, - and up he jumps and runs on. In the end he is back with the parents' legs, and no escape is open but bed. Yet now the motherbird that has accompanied him most of the way takes Daniel on her wings toward the glowing sun. "Peace

at last' sighed Daniel."

The spirit of the book and the operation of visual and verbal structures reflect the influence of the Wild Things. However, the mood is hectic. A curious contradiction pervades the plot. Actually Daniel wishes to go to bed, his flight exhausts him, but he has to resist the ritual command, until he is overpowered. Among the too many mythological-psychological dream figures, mother symbols abound. What does he fight for in fantasy: is it free will, or the wish to be put to bed with loving attention and not routinely? This seems to be the message, yet its ring is drowned by the abundant colorful, beautiful mystification. In any case, Daniel does not know how to cope with his parents. Fanstasy makes falling asleep easier. But unlike Max, Daniel does not return to a real world which has been changed for the better.

My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things, by Judith Viorst and Kay Chorao (1973) - is the third example. Both text and illustrations impress us with the flexible relationship prevailing between a lovable young mother and her lovable young boy. Of course she exhibits a few of the vexing habits and ideas parents have. She always knows best. She is absolutely certain of what she knows. Most of the time anyway. In fact she is quite human. But in spite of the mistakes she makes she may not be convinced of the existence of Zombies, Ghosts, etc. etc., that pursue the boy. This is simply beyond her understanding. Actually, the boy loves his mother the more because of her mistakes, for this dent in her superiority justifies his own certainty that the catalogued monsters do frighten him. In this, partly playful and partly serious, anguish he is alone. Adults simply don't believe in demons that make life hard for children. They don't want to know about this kind of suffering befalling their children, because they wouldn't know how to deal with it, anyway. No use telling them, probably. They have their stock reply. Beyond

this, the boy clearly feels fine with his mother. She not only brings him up according to the rules, she offers support. On the last page, when she does not make a mistake and holds him close, she turns into a Madonna figure.

The fourth example is Anthony Browne's Gorilla, The Gorilla (1983). In a nutshell this is a quietly assertive girl's fight for the attention of the father she loves. In her heart she knows he is vigorous and active, and lovable, much more than the subdued type who is busy with his work or reads the paper opposite her with his shut away face. Yet all her wooing does not coax him out of his shell. She retreats into the TV corner, - one of the most telling representations of a child's withdrawal and renunciation I have ever seen. But TV makes for passivity. Fantasy is active. Already, on the wall, the jungle encroaches. And suddenly father does pay some attention to his daughter, giving her a toy gorilla as a birthday present. Now the dream is triggered. The gorilla grows, dresses in father's clothes and takes her out for the night, - the zoo and a super-gorilla film, ice cream and cakes for Hanna and bananas for himself, and a final romance waltz at the doorstep. Perfect fantasy wish-fulfillment crosses over into reality. Did father plan this before or did he, getting the hint offered by the dream, decide on the spur of the moment? Hanna will never know. Neither will we.

Throughout the book, gorillas dominate, a lampshade, the Mona Lisa, a Vermeer protrait, the Statue of Liberty and Hanna's own drawings - a continuous metaphor of how the girl's heart overflows with her love for father as she sees him and wishes him to be: attentive, virile and dependable; and with gentle eyes (as befits all wild things and monsters since the Wild Things). And in case we are incredulous of the metaphorial gorillazation of the world around, and of the identification of father with the gorilla, - there is the last-before-one illustration, now with a drawing of the human

father and his girl on the wall and a banana sticking out conspicuously from father's hind pocket. Anthony Browne's superclean punctilious hyperrealism creates a spooky mood.

Some things do not change: Though it is Hanna's birthday, mother is totally absent in both text and illustration, just as is Max's father. It would be unfair of the same-sex parent to spoil the Oedipal fight and fun.

Some things do change though: Max wouldn't have dreamed of telling mother he just gave up a kingdom for the smell of her supper.

More examples of Coping With Parents could be given, though not too many books approach the subject in a straightforward fashion. However, the few stories we have looked at demonstrate the full range from despair to success, from ice-cold care to breaking the ice and getting through, - the range of possibilities children find themselves with for managing their lives with parents and other adults, and developing their own selves.

A special and recurrent circumstance of life with parents is Being Left Alone. Children do not like to be left alone in their homes. They easily interpret the situation as a loss of love and support, and search for ulterior reasons and for compensation. Still, being left alone is an emotion of many shades. Iwasaki's Staying Home Alone on a Rainy Day (1968) presents it in miniature. Mother has left her little girl for just a short time, to do some shopping. At first Allison feels grown up, but then it starts to rain and the house grows dark. She tries to keep herself busy, but that doesn't help. Was this noise mother coming? The phone rings and she is too afraid to answer it. Then the rain stops and through the window Allison sees mother running home - so she does care about her girl. Fleeting doubts recede.

The illustrations create the flavor of the book. They delicately evoke the textures of anxiety in a small girl's mind. Misty patches of color cover the kitten, the piano, the windows; uncertainty, - not only the rain, blurs

her view. When the text laconically says that she is afraid of the ringing phone, the picture shows her retreating behind the large window curtain and clutching its folds. In the end the sun shines through the window and in Allison's heart.

In Mommie's Scarf, by G. Lorenzer (1983), the separation from mother lasts longer, but the child finds some solace in mother's beautiful large scarf which she left at home. It is carried everywhere, on the walk with father, with the playthings, into bed. Sadness and hope, anxieties and moments of happiness are vividly and actively associated with the scarf. In a sense this is reminiscent of Winnicott's transitional object - playthings, dolls - to form and develop interpersonal relationships, beyond their attachment to their parents, especially their mothers. The scarf comforts and sustains the child until mother's return can be celebrated and the scarf returns to its ordinary functions. Again, a perfect miniature.

Sleep Well, Have Pleasant Dreams, by Edith Schindler (1982), presents staying home alone as part of the search for self-reliance, of a girl whose parents go out for the evening. In their eyes, their daughter is a big girl now (7-8 years, to judge from the illustrations). They kiss her good night and turn off the lights. - Now the dark comes alive with anxiety-arousing noises. A large beast jumps on the girl's bed. A toothy monster occupies the living room. A little red man's merry patter resounds on the kitchen table. But the girl does not give in. First she hides under the blanket, but then she gets up again and again to find out about the real source of every single noise: the cat, the alarm clock ticking away, some apples rolling off the kitchen table. She drowns out suspicious noises from outside the apartment by singing aloud. As she gets more secure, step by step, she permits herself to be tired. She turns off the lights again, crawls into bed and falls asleep:

If you are expected to act grown up you can either panic or fight back.

The illustrations enhance the contrast between the peaceful apartment and the monsters prowling in the dark. Their strong colors reverberate with the girl's emotions, oscillating between fear and self-assurance. They also disclose the intention of the book, - about which the text is silent, - and they do so mainly through the representation of the parents. In their daughter's eyes they are a young handsome couple. In the beginning when they prepare to leave:

> mother says, "sleep well, my big girl" and gives a kiss.
> She smells good. Father pinches my cheek and says,
> "Have pleasant dreams, my big girl,"

the girl's face does not reflect the same (manipulative) certainty. Does she think her parents really believe she will not be afraid being left alone? Do they want her to be afraid and find out how to overcome her fears?

In the end, the text says,

> And the beast, the monster and
> the little man are gone,

while the picture closes in on the parents who have come home. They are having a good look at their sleeping daughter. But there are no easy smiles. Mother is seen from behind. Father's face is quizzical. Are they satisfied? Are they proud of their girl? Will she tell them, next morning, how the evening went by or, rather, choose to keep quiet? The book does not close on an obviously harmonious note. A question mark, a silence hangs in the air. Growing up is a lonely affair.

No child knows this - that growing up is a lonely affair - better than Jacob, the boy in Charles Keeping's Through the Window (1970). He is accustomed to being alone and confined to the room: "The street was all Jacob knew of the world, so it was the whole world to him." He bears no grudge:

only wistfulness shows in his face, his suffering is hinted at by the cross of the church on the other side of the street, reflecting on his forehead. Solace rises from the small segment of the outside world which the window allows him to take in. There, at first, appear the well known sights, the church and the sweet shop, the old woman and her dog, his friend George, the roadsweeper, the brewery horses. Just the usual daily round. Then, as the horses break away and kill the old woman's dog, commotion and sorrow reign. As Jacob witnesses the drama, contemplation turns into curiosity, anxiety ("but he was safe up here"), jealousy and compassion. When the drama is played out, Jacob, the boy forever restricted to his room, knows a bit more about people and about life: His own dog would have fought the horses. - You may grow up some by just looking on, alone, from a distance. When his mother is up soon to make tea - is he going to tell her? Now he makes a drawing on the window.

The illustrations bespeak the intensity with which the boy in recluse lives through his eyes. The outside world and its reflections, expressionist and abstract elements, bear witness to the mingling of reality and withdrawal in Jacob's mind: the pictures have a warm musical violence, a rhythmic, but even more a tonal brilliance and sonority. The fiery stained glass hues represent the force of boy's emotions. The lace curtains serve to signify, in non-realistic expressive ever-changing patterns, the child's focal impressions and emotions.

In the end, Jacob relinquishes the outside world. The window becomes a drawing board; the creative drive takes over: while down there the old woman is carrying her <u>limp</u> dead dog, - the window-drawing shows him with his head held up high. Creative fantasy strives to correct reality.

Being Left Alone may, then, mean different things in these books;

however, a few common features appear. One seems to be a sense of "What do they know about us!" Another, that being-left-alone can stimulate the child toward self-reliance and, later on, toward autonomy. Thirdly, a certain understanding for, and patience with the parents who have left one alone.

The first two of these features - parents know so little, and being alone may enhance self-reliance - also characterizes those stories whose forthright theme is the Quest for Autonomy, which, being one of the child's basic needs - has been treated in children's literature for generations. In picture books of the last two decades it appears frequently as an ambiguous theme, representing the conflict between children's natural tendency to be increasingly responsible for themselves, - a tendency alternatively encouraged and restrained by adults, - and their equally natural dependence on these adults. Vide Max.

John Burningham's Come Away From the Water, Shirley (1977), has two parallel stories. The left-hand pages show Shirley's parents, settling down in their chairs at the sea shore. Father wants nothing but to be left alone with his pipe and his newspaper. Mother, knitting, keeps up a well-meaning tedious patter which is not needed by Shirley at all. - The right-hand pages show Shirley herself standing near the water, wrapped up in her imagination, getting involved in a dramatic fight with pirates and finding a treasure.

> "Why don't you go and play with those children?"
> says mother, - as Shirley already rows toward the
> three-master her intuition has sighted;
>
> "That's the third and last time I'm asking
> you whether you want a drink, Shirley" - as she
> and the dog overwhelm the pirates;
> "Your father might have a game with you when he's

had a little rest" - while she digs out the treasure chest....

The link between the two chains of events, until the family leaves the shore at dusk, is formed by the fact that reality residues trigger, or are incorporated in, the daydream: the beach leads out to the sea; a stray dog appearing on the beach becomes Shirley's companion in her heroic exploits; the boat beached near where she stands becomes hers for the dream.

The daydream sets up an antithesis to the dreary reality represented by the parents: Dynamic action, the far away seas, recklessness, independence - as opposed to cautionary overprotectiveness, squatting on a small strip of sand.

The book operates on three planes: there are the parents, mother offering sterile, routine advice; father reading his paper, his dumb attitude encouraging Shirley to wander off into fantasy. Then there is Shirley, playing on the beach and enacting her fantasy journey, as reported in mother's observations and reactions. Finally, there is Shirley's daydream.

On the surface all this is simply funny, while a closer look reveals the tragic lack of communication between parent and child. Shirley's quest for freedom and autonomy, with the discovery of the treasure standing as a Jungian symbol for finding her self, is detached from the parents' knowledge, interference and participation.

Annie and the Old One, by Mishka Miles and Peter Parnall (1971), relates the sory of how a Navajo girl learns to accept the approaching loss of her beloved grandmother. The Old One prepares herself and her family for her death: When the new rug is taken off the loom she will return to mother earth. She shares out gifts and Annie chooses the shuttle. But then unrest grips her. Day and night, secretly, she finds devious ways of preventing the

rug on the loom from being completed. When Annie is found out, grandmother serenely leads her toward acquiescence. Time, she explains, cannot be stopped. Now the dark textures of fright with which the illustrations have closed in on Annie, threatening to overwhelm her, move back and colors brighten up, horizons widen - as they were before. In the end Annie takes up the shuttle and starts weaving.

Text and illustrations carry us safely from anxious refusal to acceptance of separation, wisely refraining from spelling out things which the child is unable to grasp and yet maintaining the aura of death unfathomable.

Yet while the experience of sadness and death is traumatic, Annie grows in the process. Self-imposed loneliness of purpose and, with this child, her family's forebearance, lead to an onset of autonomy - when she decides to take up weaving, thus identifying with the role of the Old One by way of continuation.

A third example is Roser's Julia (1982). Teacher takes her group of girls on a trip through the woods, up the hill. Throughout the day, Julia lingers behind, gets lost, worrying and annoying the teacher and the other girls. Everything around her seduces her; she yields to every small temptation, gets involved in dangers and ends up with a small dog following her. Returning home, she presents the dog to her less than overjoyed mother.

This is the story of a day in the life of a remarkably sensitive child, who wanders off because she becomes absorbed with the sight of leaves and animals and signs in the sky. Her experiences, about which the others would not know nor care, are dangerous but finer and deeper, as sensitive as the delicate watercolors in which they are painted. At the same time, though, Julia clings tenaciously to her will, her need, to get the taste of her own strange experiences, and to her determined wish to be different, to be herself.

Of course, one might be reminded, at this point, of Leo Lionni's Frederick (1966). He, too, insists on being sensitive and different, on preserving and developing his identity. Frederick, however, is a young hero story: His strangeness will one day prove to be significant for his whole people. Shirley, Annie and Julia are individual children slowly growing toward indepedence and maturity, developing their own ordinary identity.

Having mentioned Lionni, let me add a small observation. I have always appreciated Lionni as one of the great artists of the picture book. Somehow, though I never looked at his books closely, - until I found out one day that a number of his stories, especially Pezzettino (1975), Tico and the Golden Wings (1964), Swimmy (1963), suggest a preoccupation with the motif of identity, an identity which has to be pieced together bit by bit.

Speaking of being different, and of identity, brings to mind rather forcefully, Jenny Wagner and Ron Brooks' The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek (1973) and its search for identity. Allow me to revisit it.

The story is about a fantasy creature born of the mud with a strong urge to find out who he is and what he looks like. He asks the animals he meets who he is and is rejected by each and all of them because he is horribly ugly. He goes on asking until he meets Man, who bluntly expresses his opinion that bunyips do not exist at all, though his technological devices tell him otherwise. Now the bunyip gives up. He retreats to a deserted place and is content with looking at himself in the mirror. That very night the mud stirs again and another bunyip is born, who turns up and asks who she is and what she looks like. But now there is someone to reply "You look just like me." They are not alone, though they only have each other. They still remain ugly in the eyes of others and they are not transformed into beautiful princes. They come to accept their common identity. Thus they redeem each other - which is,

according to Existentialism, a basic condition of human existence.

This is supposed to be a funny book. And it is. And it is a harsh one; it should be harder to absorb that The Wild Things when it first came out, because the interplay of hope and hopelessness, of so much hostility and loathing and so little compassion and sympathy, of pride and naivety, of resolution and resignation - is quite a heavy load to bear. The more so because so often this is what the search for identity is like. You can only be yourself when someone is with you, needs you, though the multitudes are against you. Identity is not a matter of being accepted by society. Not exactly, anyway.

Then there is the issue of ugliness. This book utters clearly the question we, the civilization of man, have never been able to answer: Why is it that we equate Beauty with Goodness, with Virtue, and Ugliness with Evil? Over the eons, mythology, religion, the arts, the folktale, advertising, and personal experience, have been telling us that this is the way it is. So has the child's own experience. Does not mother look uglier when she shouts at me than when she is satisfied? Do not bad boys refrain from combing their hair when relatives come to visit? Are all these instances expressions of an evolutionary biological truism, which education attempts to correct because of its imperfection? For it is an unethical condemnation of those who cannot help themselves. We know that the ugly person can be, is, as virtuous as the beautiful one. Yet again, we are aware that there is some truth in the Platonic assertion of a bond betewen Beauty and the Truth, of the antagonism between bodily inferiority and spiritual perfection. No school of thought (not even Existentialism) has found the key to the secret, the way to lead us out of the labyrinth.

Now the Bunyip has broadcast the dilemma, has spread the humanistic embarrassment before the eyes of children: Is the identity of the ugly only

good enough for seclusion? Are self-acceptance and acceptance by society so distant from each other?

The Bunyip may well serve to make one more point. Time and again authors, artists and educators attack those who would "psychologize" children's literature. They will claim that this, like many other books, is just a quaint amusing story, drawn and colored with care. I have tried to show that it is also a tragic one. But in the meantime two researchers, Bunbury and Tabbert, have proven among many other things, that the Bunyip used to be a "powerful being in (Australian) Aboriginal mythology" which has become "an uncertain being which is whimsical, romantic and a figure which draws on human capacity for compassion." In other words, the Bunyip is a symbol of the Aboriginal people who have become weak, whose strengths and whose very existence are not recognized by white men.

The superior book always goes much deeper than the skin.

Discussion

This demonstration offers a glimpse of the variety of ways in which motifs of developmental and existential stress can be treated in good picture books. These books have a number of common characteristics:

1. The protagonist, whether child or animal, the model offered for empathy, emulation or identification, is not exceptional. He is an ordinary being just like you and me.(1)
2. The plot, in whatever guise, thoughtfully traces serious stress situations. The world is not beautiful to a point of smooth

(1) I do not, by the way, intend to belittle the necessity of other models, notably the fairy tale and the theme of the Young Hero.

idealization. On the contrary, life and people are full of contradictions.

3. The young reader - and viewer's anxieties are taken up, and not denied or pushed away or resolved in a routine fashion (as lesser books tend to do).

4. Like other works of art, these books wish to communicate a message, but they are not offensively didactic. They have not been created to teach, but rather to entertain and to enlighten by an enriching experience.

5. The books tends to produce their impact in relatively sophisticated ways. Rather than obvious allegories they prefer metaphorical and symbolic means, particularly in the illustrations, whose messages dominate the books. A few of those means were demonstrated here: not only the content but also the size of the illustrations, their colors structures and textures may represent states of mind; defense mechanisms appear in a natural light, without any attempt at explaining them away. (The many monsters, for instance, who are called up to aid in dramatizing, personifying and exorcizing conflicts and anxieties - The aspects of the unbearable - inside and outside - all serve serious purposes and most of them have gentle eyes.); reality residues aid in releasing and directing fantasy.

These books also differ in several aspects:

1. Aesthetically, they differ in genres and styles and techniques by which they strive to reach the child or youth.

2. Psychologically, the most meaningful difference lies in how the denouement is arrived at, in the way a solution is reached, if at all. Max of the Wild Things struggles to victory over both his own and his mother's wildness and regains her love. The Bunyip in his dark corner

accomplishes a sort of shutaway happiness through identity by companionship with a similar unfortunate being. Shirley has to accept and live with the knowledge that communication with parents is based on misunderstandings; by taking responsibility for herself, she alienates them; imagination shows the way into the future. The girl in Sleep Well ... does not let us into her secret. We know she fights her fears admirably. We cannot be sure that her success contributes to lower anxiety. Annie's anxiety about losing her grandmother is overcome through rational and emotional acceptance of the unavoidable through the guidance of her grandmother and mother. The Gorilla-girl attains the security of her father's love, and his attention, at least for a day. Julia remains true to her own experience. Jacob (Through the Window) and Daniel (Bedtime!), in very different ways, live with their limitations, and so on.

However, before I arrive at conclusions, I would like to introduce, almost as an afterthought, three books which are relevant to stress - books beyond the pale of the models to which we have kept until now - books outside over there, if you will. They are also very unlike each other. They may serve to widen the horizons of our concepts of how the picture book can treat stress.

The first one is Raymond Briggs' When the Wind Blows (1982). Its subject: the fear of nuclear annihilation. It is a picture book intended to be read and viewed by older children and adolescents. Its publication came in response to the increasingly widespread fear, in Europe and the Americas, of nuclear destruction. In the words of R.J. Lifton of Yale,

> "Children as young as five have begun to fear that the world could be annihilated by a chain of events

that adults cannot control" (Salholz, 1982)

a fear fuelled by the adults

> "who want to know the first thing when they turn on the news whether World War II has started," as one TV executive has expressed it (The New Yorker, 1982).

The book tells how an elderly provincial English couple prepare to survive the imminent atomic bomb and how, after the blast, they die a slow, solitary, painful, hapless death. It is a harrowing book whose message is based, visually and verbally, on the extreme contrast between the two kind simple-minded souls trying to cope with a macabre situation they are unable to understand, and whose doings are recounted in hundreds of very small comics-style pictures, reflecting feverish, often funny, activity - and the unspeakable horror of the nuclear bomb and the blast, exhibited in stark, violent, aesthetically impressive full page pictures. There is also a gradual transition, in the color composition of the large format pages, from the healthy red and green of the countryside and the couple's small residence, through the blast, to the dreadful hues of radiation death. Science and technology create new sources of anxiety and stress.

Psychologically, though we are induced to smile in several places, the book clearly intends to stir up fear to the point where the reader-viewer is triggered into social or political action. The book does not offer any hints at how to engage in such action. But the intention implicit in the plot and the dialogue is that we would be ill-advised to trust national and local authorities to save us from the couple's destiny. It all depends on us. In <u>When the Wind Blows</u>, there is <u>no solution</u> in sight. Stress is heightened, not eased. - Let us remember that this outcry for personal, individual social responsibility originates with Briggs, who created the most lyrical of picture

books, The Snowman (1978).

The second book is the extreme opposite of all the books we have met so far. It attempts to deal with stress by offering harmony, to counteract distortion by suggesting rhythm and evenness. Do in the Red Boots (1968), by Heinz Herzka and Heiri Steiner, is an old love of mine, a book which has been, to my mind, unduly neglected. Do ... tells of a girl's journeys into the magic country of nature. Each day's solitary adventuring takes Do into the Woods, up the mountains down to the pond, and so on, and gets her acquainted with many kinds of animals. On the first day, for instance, she sets out on the wings of a large bird, flies past the moon and the sun, glides down the steep mountain on a spider's threads and returns home on the back of a snail. The journeys, seven in all, are narrated in a gentle, serene tone; even in moments of danger Do never loses her poise; her eyes are wide open to catch the wonder and excitement around her; mythical overtones can be felt throughout the simple tales; the cyclic pattern of setting out, getting involved with the elements and forces of nature, being on the move, and returning to the security of home suggests the diurnal cycle. The book has an epic quality, symbolizing a period in the development of a young girl.

Do's vivid journeys into nature have, as I found out recently, two sequels: One, which is ready for publication, tells of Do's adventures, meeting people in both town and countryside. The other, of which the text and sketches for the illustrations exist, prepared by the illustrator shortly before his death, relates how Do finds a friend.

Though the magic mood is sustained throughout, Do is far from being an escapist figure. She is a child, one representing many, gifted with the power to live her experiences intensely and intimately. As she finds out about nature and civilization and human relationships, her identity grows. Do is a symbol of the child's, of all children's, capability to experience themselves

and the world around them holistically, and to achieve personal integration. Thus, their identity is strengthened against stress, - past, present and future.

Incidentally, the Trilogy of Do consistutes another rebuttal of the thesis that when psychologists touch children's literature, they drily dissect it or overburden it: the author of this sensitive series is a very well known Swiss children's psychiatrist.

Of course, the third example is Outside Over There. Since its publication, a large number of reviews and analyses of the book have appeared, American and European, differing widely in their approach. So I do not mean to analyse the many aspects of the book here. I simply wish to raise one point which keeps me thinking.

All the writers I have come across, with one exception, have praised the book as a very significant one. None of them has, I believe, interpreted it convincingly. We will need many years for that. What Sendak himself has offered to say about the book, rejecting psychologizing outright and at the same time comparing it to "a psychological geography lesson - go there if you want some trouble" (Conrad III, 1981), and also saying there were things in it he would not speak about (Cott, 1984) - has not been helpful.

It is clearly a book about existential stress. It tells of, and visualizes, the successful resurgence of Oedipal links in adolescence. It shows that growing up may mean that Ida is at the mercy of situations and events and forces she, and we, cannot understand, though she is made responsible for what happens. She has to fight for the baby, without quite understanding what makes her succeed in overcoming these events and the forces behind them. We may accept that life can be like that, complex and full of riddles and tragic silences. Outside Over There is one of the significant

books of the age, to be assimilated over chains of interpretations, reasoning and intuiting over a long period. It has been created by an artist who has again and again opened new channels of experience for children and adults alike.

It is great art, - though Sendak is, I believe, one of very few major contemporary artists who are hailed although, or because, they borrow, consistently and admittedly, from artists and styles of many ages. It also is a book about the force of music, and its words and pictures create chords and threads impressing our minds and emotions like a sonorous polyphonic development.

Just as assumedly most of us, I admire and love this great man, Maurice Sendak, and the richness of his dialogue with art and the unconscious. And I am enchanted with the overpowering imagery of Outside Over There.

However, at some point hesitation grips me, a nagging doubt about the book's humanistic significance for children, and for us adults. What I mean is this: in recent decades the realistic and rationalistic trends in literature and in art, and therefore, in children's literature, have, happily, partly receded and opened the way to a resurgence of the fantastic, the magic, the irrational, the metaphoric and the symbolic. As for children, surely Bettelheim's Uses of Enchantment (1977) has contributed much to this development. We believe again in the beautiful uncanny symbols of the unconscious, and in myth. Yet it might well be that we have let the pendulum swing too far away from the center. In myth, and in mythical thinking, there is no place for history, for change. Myth aspires to be believed, to exert influences, because it symbolizes eternal truth. Myth is significant because it is static. We do not need to understand it.

Certainly man needs myth, but it has to be balanced by rational thinking and by a belief in dynamic development.

And one more thought intrudes: When Ida returns through the woods, she passes by the hut where Mozart is sitting at the piano composing his opera The Magic Flute. - Surely - coming from Maurice Sendak who was, at the time Outside Over There grew in him, also busy creating the scenery for a production of the Magic Flute, - this historical association is no private joke. On the contrary, it serves as a key metaphor connecting the two magic stories.

Now one of the central motifs of The Magic Flute is the redeeming power of music. Similarly Ida's horn, which at first causes her to neglect the baby, later on aids her to save it.

However, the other profound motif of the opera is the triumph of spiritual, rational clarity, symbolized by the incandescent sun, - over the dark irrational forces of the night. The lovers, young adults, freed of their errors through severe tests, ripen and find themselves and each other. So too, Ida the child errs and faces harrowing tests and triumphs, - yet the world does not shine much brighter. Ida's conscience is set at rest, stress lessens, - but has she assimilated - not overcome, assimilated - the irrational in and around her? Have father and mother become approachable? Sendak the existentialist negates it: For Ida growing up is a lonely affair, - a process both encouraged and threatened by primal, archetypal, forces and constellations pulsating in the unknown. Outside Over There, Ida's turbulent and secretive mission, takes place in a wholly mythical world. Directed by forces which do not declare themselves - it represents a mythization of consciousness. Is this imagery overpowered?

But then we must also be aware, beyond the individual aspects - of the collective-cultural implications of the story and its symbols and metaphors.

What I mean is this: Great artists have the power to divine impending

developments: Is this where we are going? Into a less rational future? Or else, does Sendak sense a deep-set need to counterbalance the process of an industrialization of consciousness generated by technology and the media? - We shall remain attached to this book for a long time to come. It represents what Ellin Greene (1984) has called the "darker" vision. However, we, the educators, also have to find our path between the extremes, and to respect the humane integrative personality of the growing child.

Do, When the Wind Blows, Outside Over There - Certainly these three disparate books enlarge our horizons of how the picture book may encourage the child to work through developmental and existential stress.

Conclusions

In their common and diverse characteristics lies, to my mind, the psychological significance of the books considered as a category. This signficance culminates in the variety of solutions and non-solutions presented. Life is reflected authentically: Some problems can be overcome, others can be sublimated, still others have to be lived with. Thus, the books may assist children to challenge the meaning of their lives at a certain stage, or when confronted with problematic situations, which they are unable to approach on a rational plane - by suggesting metaphorical and symbolic means of working - through the blockages or shadows in their development.

These picture books communicate to children serveral psychological messages:

- They offer examples, or even models, of how to overcome defencelessness. Children can associate protagonist and plot, metaphors and symbols, verbal and visual impressions, with their own situations and experiences. They can enter and leave the story on their own terms, a point emphasized by Thiele (1982).

- Then these books also demonstrate that conflicts need to be static. They have a way of changing, moving along. You don't have to feel trapped by them. Their pressure can be diminished as unexpected things happen. (1)
- Furthermore, the susceptibility of conflicts to change grows even more obvious if and when you act. The protagonists in our books exhibit not a small measure of obstinacy and conviction. Through their activity, they improve their own sense of value and of identity. Withdrawing temporarily into fantasy is one means of gaining renewed strength and a fresh viewpoint. Probing the environment again and again is another. In these processes creative ideas appear.
- The inclusive message turns out to be that states and phases of existential stress may be resolved or at least alleviated by largely unconscious maturation processes embracing inner and outer reality.

Now, I am left with a question on my mind: progressively, the picture book becomes more complex, turns to higher age levels, introduces adult themes. Is this development simply, "simply," a sign of our visual age, or does it support Neill Postman's thesis of the Disappearance of Childhood?

Whatever the answer to this question might be, the contemporary picture book constitutes, in its superior examples, a powerful fertile aesthetic medium offering aid to the child in his/her growing up and coping with life crises.

(1) With the exception of _When the Wind Blows_, in which humanity is at its end.

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